

Coming Home: Steps to Stay Safe as You Return Home

**Prepare for your return: Bring the right supplies and drive carefully.
Do a home safety inspection and make a cleanup plan.
Know common cleanup dangers and be aware of other dangers.**

Prepare for your return

- Go home only after authorities say it is safe
- Call the power and gas company to find out if services are available in your area
- Let family or friends know you are returning home
- Make sure you have had a tetanus shot in the past 10 years

Drive carefully

- Do not drive through floodwaters or over downed power lines
- Traffic lights may be out, and street signs may be turned or gone
- Stop at all intersections and have a full tank of gas

Bring the right supplies—check them off

- Lots of **bottled** drinking water and some sports drink
- Food that does not have to be kept cold
- Flashlight with extra batteries
- First-aid kit
- Battery-operated radio
- Waterproof boots or waders
- Safety gear like work gloves, safety goggles, a hard hat, and hard-soled boots or shoes
- N-95 face masks (available at hardware stores)
- Camera or video camera to record damage
- Hand tools: Hammer, saw, screwdriver, crowbar, crescent wrench, pliers, etc.
- Trash bags and cleaning supplies
- Cell phone

Do a home safety inspection

- Do not enter your house if it is damaged extensively or if you think it may fall down
- If water surrounds your house, do not enter it
- Check outside for loose power lines and gas leaks; call the power company if you find any before entering
- **Proceed carefully:** Floors may be slippery or have holes, ceilings and tall furniture may fall
- Open all doors and windows
- Check for broken water pipes
- Have a reputable contractor inspect your roof
- Check trees for broken branches and leaning trunks
- Check for animals like snakes

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Make a cleanup plan

- Contact your insurance agent and mortgage lender
- Photograph or videotape the damage to your home
- Plan to do only what you can safely do
- Hire professionals to repair roof, wiring, walls, and appliances and to cut down damaged trees

Cleanup Dangers

Electrical dangers

- Be sure the main electric power and all circuit breakers are off
- Have the electrical wiring inspected before turning on the main power
- Clean and dry appliances before turning them on
- Do not use electrical tools or appliances while standing in water

Carbon monoxide (CO)

- CO is an odorless, colorless gas that can kill you within minutes
- Never use generators, pressure washers, or other gas-powered tools inside your home
- Keep generators and other engines outside and away from windows and vents
- Have the gas company turn on the gas—do not do it yourself
- Know the signs of CO poisoning: headache, fatigue, nausea, dizziness, vomiting, loss of consciousness

Falls

- Falls from ladders and roofs can cause broken bones and death
- Put ladders on flat, solid ground and have a helper hold the base
- Do not stand on the top two rungs
- Use a ladder that reaches at least three feet above the roof edge
- Be careful on your roof—shingles and plastic sheeting can be very slippery

Chainsaws

- Chainsaws are very dangerous
- Use a hand saw for small jobs
- Wear cut-proof chainsaw pants, gloves, and goggles/face shield
- Hold the chainsaw with two hands
- Do not cut with the tip of the chainsaw
- Never cut above chest height or while on a ladder
- Hire a tree trimmer to cut down large branches and trees

Cleaning products

- Always wear rubber gloves and boots while using cleaning products
- **Never mix bleach and ammonia** or other cleaning products
- If you splash cleaning product on your skin or eyes, rinse with plenty of bottled water

Other concerns

- Get help lifting heavy things to avoid back strains
- Protect yourself from insects: Use products with DEET or Picaridin on skin and clothing
- Deep cuts and puncture wounds may become infected. See a doctor!
- People with serious health or breathing problems should not go into moldy homes
- Wear an N-95 face mask when working around mold
- Drink plenty of bottled water and rest frequently



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Public Information Center
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